The Existential Threat Set

We face at least three [potential] existential threats (an existential threat is a threat to a people's existence or survival). These include:

-- The threat from weapons with mass and complex effects (WMCE) (nuclear, biological, chemical, electromagnetic, radiological, cyber, information manipulation, new science [artificial / super intelligence, cybernetics, laser / directed energy science, etc.], and modern enhanced explosive materials). This “threat” is necessarily associated with a specific alliance, coalition, nation / state, or exceptional sub-state group. Features of this threat could occur [and are occurring] on US soil or elsewhere, often with global effect.

-- The hybrid threat – sometimes referred to as the “multi-dimensional / multi-domain threat,” Hybrid warfare is a strategy that blends conventional warfare, irregular warfare and WMCE, from adversarial nation-states or coalitions, and in a few cases sub-state actors, in specific contextual conditions. This is unlikely to occur on US soil but would affect the US and would probably include direct US involvement.

-- The threat of internal disruption and destabilization. This threat might best be characterized as any event or series of events which cause the population to be in distress and to cause them to lose faith and confidence in governance, on a scale which would be destabilizing. Among other manifestations of this condition, severe environmental disasters, economic failure, and some forms of societal upheaval, are included. This would occur on US soil and may also occur elsewhere but have impact on the US.

Each of these “threats,” which can be more precisely defined in detail and condition, together form a complex and challenging set of conditions that would have significant internal as well as external effect on our national security, should any [or all of them] become active.

An additional “threat” concern is the contemporary existence and seemingly the growing problem of sophisticated crime. This is often lumped in with the cyber problem, but it goes well beyond that – and should include consideration of a broad range of white-collar and economic crimes, crimes with societal impact (illicit drugs, human trafficking, contraband transfer, economic crime, and similar endeavors), the existence of organized gangs and criminal organizations, and corruption among officials and power brokers. This is occurring inside the US and elsewhere and is reflective of the “global” condition we find ourselves in.

ENEMY LOGIC

The “Enemy” may have a logic set that goes something like this:

We have fought the Americans for many years – arguably since just after the Vietnam War – using low intensity warfare and unconventional warfare, often in the context of conflict short of War. We engaged in every form and every venue – including espionage, diplomatic skulduggery, adversarial economic and trade practices, information manipulation and disinformation, political opposition and subterfuge, cyber aggression, and of course deception.

We could not engage directly with the U.S. in “conventional” warfare because to do so would have been to invite disaster. We came close in Iraq, and in threatening options on the Korean Peninsula, but we never took any final steps. The facts were that none of us – the “Enemy” – could hope to confront the Americans in a way that would allow them to decide, to prepare, to mass, and to act, on conventional terms, against us. They were simply too strong, too capable, and too imposing.

In every conflict in which America used force – we learned several lessons. Among them: You cannot hide from their sensors, sources and methods. Another is that if they can find a target – which they seemed very capable of doing – they could destroy it. Finally – we learned that when American military personnel have the freedom and support necessary to act, they have full resolve and are impressively effective. Their soldiers do not lack valor.

The corollary to this was that we found their attackable vulnerability – their “military objective center of gravity.” It is their national will – and the political and cultural support the United States provides – as a nation – to its military in a specific context. Some military actions are well-supported and even “popular,” in the parlance of politicians and pundits, and among the larger body of citizens.

But…it was noted that the firmness, the strength, the dependability, of this support, was affected by many variables, some of which could be influenced in a variety of ways. Harsh action was used – and it had some effect. Cultural baggage was used to weaken resolve. Certain political movements were used in opposition to military events. Humanitarian concerns and related issues often weakened their will to continue. It was tricky to predict just what combination of conditions and circumstances might cause the Americans – and their Allies – to fade away.

Extended conflict was nearly impossible for the Americans to tolerate unless they believed that somehow, they would lose too much if they quit the field. Interestingly, the idea that preparation would take too much time had recently become a discussion among the Americans. Not only did they want conflict to be short and relatively easy, but they wanted rapid resolution.

It was obvious that this was part of the strategic key to being able to engage and then believe that America’s will would falter, and their internal support for their own military activities would wane or even become adversarial.

The question became – how to accomplish this desirable state-of-affairs on a predictable basis – without awakening the sleeping giant.

The answer is being formulated. There are several models.

1. Achieve complete strategic surprise and then act so quickly that the Americans, as they often say, would not know what hit them.
2. Attack America’s will on every front, in many ways, some direct, some so subtle that even the most insightful observers would not realize what was happening.
3. Use every feature of capability, spread over time and conditions, to weaken and confuse them, and then strike deeply when the opportunity is right.

Our operational and strategic goals are congruent and these efforts, taken together, may achieve synergy.

However, most theoreticians believe that even with achievable potential advantages it is foolhardy to take on the U.S. and their Allies unless the commitment to do so is complete. This seems to signal a belief that there are only three logical ways to confront and “oppose” the U.S. that may lead to the end of America’s global domination or even to their demise as a Nation-State.

1. Use weapons and capabilities which are so devastating that the quick result may be some form of capitulation by the U.S.

2. Do what we – the “Enemy” – have been doing but increase our intensity and work to isolate America and weaken its resolve.

3. Engage the Americans in every way using the second approach, and then strike with devastating effect when conditions seem right.

One can only hope that no one warns the U.S. of these ideas lest they begin to act against us. They can fend us off, counter us, and defeat us at will, but only if they understand our intent, believe in our resolve, and act ahead of our decision points.

God only knows how this will turn out.

The impact of any or all of this [potential] is hard to state with precision – but it could obviously be “existential” at some point. PMH Copyright © Enterprises LLC 2018